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ABSTRACT

Discussion concerns traits of high risk elementary school students, the psychology of learning, what is to be avoided by those working in early intervention programs, and qualifications for teachers who work with parents and young children to reduce the size of the at-risk student population. It is argued that these teachers should have adequate course work in educational psychology, philosophy of education, sociology, anthropology, oral and written communication, liberal arts, history of education, research methodology, curriculum, supervision, and teaching. Teachers working with parents should also have appropriate field experience. Trivia in objectives, guess work in selecting learning opportunities, and evaluation techniques that lack validity and reliability should be avoided. A psychological, and not merely logical, curriculum in which the learner selects learning activities on the basis of interest, meaning, and self-fulfillment can be balanced with measurement-driven instruction to provide an optimal sequence of learning activities by means of which at-risk students can make progress. (RH)

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PARENTS AS TEACHERS

Marlow Ediger

Parents as teachers emphasize a philosophy of early intervention in helping infants from birth to three years. Too frequently, emphasis is placed upon assisting secondary students to stay in school, rather than dropout prior to graduation. At risk high school students then are identified and assisted to stay in school to complete graduation requirements. It is admirable to assist and guide secondary students to stay in school rather than become a dropout with little hope of securing a job with adequate remuneration and respect to live the good life. However, the high school level of instruction is a little late in time sequence to have holding power of students to stay in school. At risk pupils need to be identified early, such as the elementary school years. On the early primary years of school, young pupils reveal characteristics of being potential dropouts. These traits might well include

1. an extreme lack of interest in achieving the objectives stressed in the school curriculum.
2. frequent absences and tardiness for no apparent purposeful reason.
3. a lack of having friends in the school and class setting.
4. failure in learning to read, write, and perform in arithmetic.
5. lack of reasons for attending school.
6. short attention spans to attend to ongoing lessons and units.
7. parents not backing education and the objectives emphasized in the school curriculum.

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8. problems faced in the home setting involving marital discords.
9. older siblings showing delinquent behavior.
10. a lack of purpose in life in home and in society itself.

The Young Child at Risk

From birth to three years is a very crucial time for the young child. Continuous progress in learning is a must. What is lost out on in goal achievment needs to be diagnosed and remediated. The diagnosis/remediation can be time consuming with the young child losing out in the process. Instead of diagnosis/remediation, learners need to achieve, grow, and develop continuously.

If too little is expected of the child, continuous progress may not be in emphasis. A lack of achievement is then in evidence. Sequence is lacking in the young child's achievement. Too much can also be expected of a child thus making for feelings of frustration and unhappiness on his/her part. With a lack of goal attainment, inappropriate order of experiences is the net result. Expectations for the young child to achieve need to be realistic, wholesome, and intrinsically satisfying.

For each school district, an ample number of certified teachers needs to work with parents. Parents are the first individuals that an infant has contact with. The quality of the contact is of utmost importance. Certified teachers need to assist parents to become teachers of their offspring. At risk population should be greatly minimized with properly licensed teachers guiding parents to assist the

infant to progress sequentially, be it in knowledge, skills, or attitudes.

For a teacher to possess proper qualifications to work with parents and young children, the former should have adequate course work and field experiences in

1. educational psychology. The emphasis here should be placed upon the teacher and parents utilizing what is known about theory and practice emphasizing principles of learning to assist each youngster to achieve continuous progress. Diagnosis and remediation of at risk young children are musts.
2. philosophy of education. Here the emphasis (in classes taken and field experiences encountered to meet degree requirements) must be placed upon diverse schools of thought in teaching and learning and how each might help optimal young child progress.
3. sociology and anthropology. Children individually and collectively experience a culture which assists in determining human behavior. Minority groups might possess a unique culture which needs to be accepted by the teacher who works with parents and children.
4. oral communicataion. Being able to communicate clearly, politely, and accurately is a must. Parents need to feel welcome to call upon the designated teacher who assists the former in working effectively with young children. The teacher needs to be accepting of parents and children. This acceptance is shown through the clear, accurate communication of ideas shared with parents. A sharing of ideas concept is in evidence

and not a one way street of communication. Quality English classes emphasizing vital goals in oral communication is a must.

5. written communication. Letters, notices, and objectives need to be skilfully written by the teacher. Creativity of content and salient subject matter in the written communication should be communicated effectively to the parent. The mechanics of writing such as correct spelling of words, punctuation, capitalization, and usage are highly important to clarify written communication with parents. Undergraduate and graduate English courses placing heavy emphasis upon writing to communicate effectively needs adequate emphasis.
6. liberal arts courses which enhance general education of the teacher of parents and children. The liberal arts curriculum should emphasize course work in mathematics, science, the social sciences, language and literature, the fine and practical arts, as well as physical education. A well educated person is needed in the teaching profession. The liberal arts curriculum should make for a well rounded person who has been educated in classical content. Subject matter acquired here can be valued for its own sake, as well as for utilization in school and society.
7. history of education. A well educated teacher of parents and young children needs to have adequate background information of the history of the profession. Knowledge acquired from the history of education provides perspective and direction in working with parents of children. Continuity of educational

thought and the profession of teaching is also possible through a study of the history of education.

8. theoretical and practical internship. Each teacher who will work with parents as teachers needs to experience a quality set of experiences as an intern on the undergraduate/graduate level. Vital objectives for the intern to attain should be in the offing. Experiences and activities of the intern should focus upon achieving objectives. A comprehensive set of experiences and activities needs to be in emphasis so that the intern reveals excellence as a future teacher of parents and children. The internship needs to emphasize working with parents to assist them to do an excellent job of educating their offspring.
9. research methodology in conducting experimental, descriptive survey, and historical studies of parents as teachers. Also, the teacher of parents and children needs to be conversant on completed research. The completed research needs to be analyzed in terms of strengths and weaknesses of studies on parents as teachers. Adequate quality research needs to be done to determine ways of helping at risk young children.
10. curriculum, supervision and teaching. The teacher of parents and children needs to be able to select relevant, vital objectives of instruction, learning opportunities to achieve the objectives, as well as appraisal procedures to notice progress of the parents as teachers program. At risk young

children need to experience quality objectives, learning opportunities, as well as evaluation techniques.

What to Avoid in Working in Early Intervention Programs

Failure in identifying at risk traits is truly a problem when working with parents as teachers. Measurement devices may not possess needed validity and reliability to determine at risk. If a measurement device is not valid to utilize in the appraisal process, it has no value. A valid measurement instrument then needs to be in evidence. Validity means the measurement instrument measures what it states will be measured. Thus a measurement device will, if vaild, measure deficiencies/delays in language, motor control, social development, vital skills, knowledge achievement, as well as in the affective dimension.

Observations made may be subjective and possess bias. Teachers and parents need to be objective in observations made. The observations must be made on deficiencies possessed by the young child. Remedial procedures need to be based on observations made. Teachers and parents need to know when interventions are needed and when to refrain from intervening. Teachers and parents need to be highly knowledgeable about areas of diagnosis and relevant procedures for remediation. Ignorance in diagnosis and intervention procedures need to be avoided.

Teachers and parents need to work cooperatively to assist the child to attain as much as possible intellectualy, socially, emotionally, and physically. Each of these four areas of development is important and

interacts with the other traits. Thus, for example, the emotional facet of development (attitudes) might well affect how well the at risk young child does in the intellectual, social, and physical facets. Cooperation is a key factor in having the teacher and parent work together for the good of the at risk young child. A lack of cooperation then needs to be avoided.

Teachers and parents need to develop a quality curriculum. A quality curriculum has selected vital component parts. Thus releveant goals need to be established. Each goal needs scrutiny. Goals selected for at risk young children need to be purposeful. Thus reasons can be given to justify each goal. Goals individually are then salient for learners to attain. Cognitive, affective, and psychomotor objectives need to be in the offing for at risk children attainment. Each of these three kinds of objectives need attainment by at risk children achievement. Balance is then in evidence when rational balance is in evidence among cognitive, affective, and psychomotor ends. To achieve goals, at risk children need to experience worthwhile tasks. Tasks need to be on the understanding level of pupils. Each task provides for individual differences. To provide for individual differences, the curriculum needs to be adjusted to the present achievement level of each child. Sequential tasks need to follow so that optimal achievement for each at risk young child is possible. The interests of learners is salient to secure when selecting tasks which relate directly to the started goals.

Evaluation is necessary to ascertain what each at risk young child has learned. Evaluation needs to be ongoing and continuous. Each

technique utilized to appraise at risk children needs to encourage interest in learning and achieving. Teacher and parent observation of the young at risk child might well be the best procedure to utilize. Quality standards and criteria need to be utilized by the teacher and parent when observing at risk progress. Observation tactics might well include the concepts of diagnosis and remediation. In addition to observational means of appraising at risk children's progress, other evaluataion techniques also need to be utilized if they measure accurately that which is to be evaluated.

Trivia in objectives, guess work in selecting learning opportunities, and evaluation techniques lacking validity and reliability need to be avoided.

The Psychology of Learning

Objectives, learning opportunities, and appraisal procedures need to incorporate that which reflects worthwhile teaching and learning psychologies.

Measurement driven instruction (MDI) emphasizes the utilization of precise, measurably stated objectives selected by the teacher and parents for the young at risk child to achieve. Either the child achieves or does not attain the measurably stated objective. The teacher/parent selects the order or sequence of objectives for the at risk to achieve. The objectives are then ordered in a logical way. From that which is simplest to that which is gradually more complex in

sequence provides the guideline for the teacher/parent to arrange objectives for the at risk child to achieve. Sequence then resides within the teacher and parent. Success in goal attainment is very vital for any at risk child. The child's progress in achieving each objective needs appraisal. Any objective not achieved at a given time needs a new teaching strategy so that child success is in evidence in learning. For each stated objective, a learning opportunity is implemented so that the chosen end may be achieved by the at risk child.

Somewhat toward the other end of the continuum, a less structured curriculum may be in evidence for the at risk child. Here, the learning activities are open ended and involve flexibility in that the child can select form among alternatives. Tasks for at risk children to pursue are chosen on the basis of interest, meaning, and self-fulfillment. The at risk child is the chooser. A psychological, not logical, curriculum is then in evidence in that the at risk child selects tasks to complete, from among alternatives. Only those deemed to possess purpose may be completed. The at risk child is the chooser. Sequence resides within the child as he/she selects activities and experiences.

In Closing

At risk children need to be identified early such as in the preschool years. Numerous states emphasize identification of at risk from birth to three years of age as an early intervention program. For later years of development, additional intervention programs need implementation. Diagnosis and remediation are two vital concepts in an

intervention program for early at risk children. Accurate means need to be utilized to diagnose, otherwise additional problems of at risk might arise. Quality remediation procedures, not distorted methods, must follow.

Two extremes need avoiding, expecting too little or excessively much of any child in terms of achievement. Teachers working with parents and children need a quality preservice degree program. Teachers need to be able to work effectively with parents and children.

A quality at risk curriculum contains worthwhile objectives, meaningful learning activities, and valid, reliable appraisal procedures.

The psychology of learning to be emphasized needs to express excellent sequence to make for optimal at risk pupil progress.

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